

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

The present invention concerns methods and reagents useful in modulating hepatitis C virus (HCV) gene expression in a variety of applications, including use in therapeutic, diagnostic, target validation, and genomic discovery applications. Specifically, the invention  
5 relates to small nucleic acid molecules, such as short interfering nucleic acid (siNA), short interfering RNA (siRNA), double-stranded RNA (dsRNA), micro-RNA (miRNA), and short hairpin RNA (shRNA) molecules capable of mediating RNA interference (RNAi) against hepatitis C virus (HCV) gene expression and/or activity. The small nucleic acid molecules are useful in the treatment and diagnosis of HCV infection, liver failure, hepatocellular  
10 carcinoma, cirrhosis and any other disease or condition that responds to modulation of HCV expression or activity.